

**Amendments to the Specification:**

Please amend the title as follows:

-- OPTICAL COUPLER HAVING PROTECTIVE SHEATH --

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 17 with the following amended paragraph:

-- As shown in figure 2b, during the second step, these bared optical fiber portions 17 and 18 are provided with a first or inner sheath 21. The portions 17 and 18 nevertheless remain sliding within this first sheath 21. The sheath 21 is preferably heat-shrinkable and shrinks under the effect of heat on the two portions 17 and 18. This makes such fibers easier to handle in allowing them to be slightly curved. --

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 5, line 26 with the following amended paragraph:

-- According to Figure 2d, the entire connection zone 22 is surrounded by a second or outer protective sheath 23. This second protective sheath 23 is preferably bonded. It covers at least a part of the sleeve 15, namely at least the part from which the bared optical fiber portions 17 and 18 emerge. This second sheath 23 also covers the plait formed by the wicks 13, 14 and 16 and therefore also covers the first heat-shrinkable sheath 21. Finally, the second sheath 23 also covers cable portions 19 and 20 of the fibers 2 and 3 at which the bared optical fibers 17 and 18 emerge. The second sheath 23 is bonded at least to the first sheath 21. In the example shown, to connect the first device to two second devices, the second sheath 23 forms a Y-shaped protective conduit in which the stem of the Y is formed by the sleeve 15. --